

Message Text

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ACTION NODS-00

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FM AMEMBASSY AMMAN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5257

S E C R E T AMMAN 2002

NODIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV, US, IS, JO, XF

SUBJECT: PERCEPTIONS OF THE BEGIN VISIT

REF: STATE 051239

1. IN JORDAN, AS REFLECTED IN PAST REPORTING, THERE IS GROWING DISAPPOINTMENT IN THE LEADERSHIP AND THE PUBLIC THAT THE U.S. HAS NOT SEEN FIT TO EXERT ITS ASSUMED CONSIDERABLE LEVERAGE ON BEGIN AND THE ISRAELIS TO PRODUCE A MORE FORTHCOMING, IN THE JORDANIAN VIEW, RESPONSE TO THE ADAT INITIATIVES. THIS HAS BEEN SOMEWHAT OFFSET BY THE U.S. STATEMENTS ON SETTLEMENTS, OUR SUBMISSION OF THE ISRAELI AND ARAB AIRCRAFT "PACKAGE DEAL" AND GROWING ATTENTION HERE TO PUBLIC OPINION POLLS IN THE U.S. WHICH SHOW SOME U.S. SHIFT IN OPINION AWAY FROM BEGIN AND ISRAEL AND TOWARD SADAT. THE BEGIN VISIT HAS NOT YET BEGUN TO RECEIVE SERIOUS ATTENTION IN THE PRESS OR TO BE THOUGHT ABOUT SERIOUSLY BY THE LEADERSHIP (MOST INFLUENTIAL OF WHICH HAVE BEEN OUT OF THE COUNTRY FOR THE LAST 8-10 DAYS).

2. HOWEVER, CAIRO PRESS AND SADAT ARE MUCH LISTENED TO IN AMMAN WHERE THEY WILL AWAKE RESPONSIVE CORD

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PARTICULARLY WITH KING HUSSEIN WITH THEMES SADAT HAS BEEN DEVELOPING FOR US PRIVATELY. INDEED, HUSSEIN WILL WANT TO SEE IT AS A WATERSHED BECAUSE HE CLEARLY BELIEVES THAT WE ARE THE KEY TO POSSIBLE FLEXIBILITY ON THE PART OF THE ISRAELIS AND THAT A MEETING OF BEGIN WITH THE PRESIDENT IS THE PERFECT PLACE FOR US TO PLAY THAT KEY ROLE. THUS EXPECTATIONS WILL

BE HIGH. INCONCLUSIVE OR NEGATIVE RESULTS FROM THE LOCAL PERSPECTIVE WILL BE A DISAPPOINTMENT, EVEN AGAINST THE BACKDROP OF EXISTING DISAPPOINTMENT OVER THE FACT THAT UP TO NOW THE U.S. HAS NOT BEEN SEEN IN THE ARAB MIND AS EITHER READY OR ABLE TO SAVE (OR SALVAGE) THE SADAT INITIATIVES BY WORKING MORE ON THE ISRAELIS.

3. WE CAN OFFSET TO SOME EXTENT EXAGGERATIONS ON THE PART OF THE LEADERSHIP HERE OF THEIR EXPECTATIONS BY SOME EARLY PLAIN TALK ABOUT WHAT IS POSSIBLE. HOWEVER, TO THE EXTENT WE DO SO, WE RISK FURTHER UNDERMINING CONFIDENCE IN OUR ROLE IF WE DO NOT PROVIDE THE KING WITH A CLEARER IDEA OF SOME OF OUR LONGER TERM STRATEGY AND PLANNING TO BRING ABOUT A PEACE SETTLEMENT. INDEED, ONE OF THE PRINCIPAL FACTORS IN HIS COMING INTO NEGOTIATIONS WILL BE HIS CONTINUING AND GROWING CONFIDENCE THAT WE MEAN BUSINESS IN THESE NEGOTIATIONS, THAT WE HAVE A STRATEGY, THAT WE INTEND TO PRODUCE MOVEMENT NOT JUST MOMENTUM, AND I BELIEVE STRONGLY WE SHOULD KEEP THIS CLEARLY IN MIND AS WE MOVE AHEAD.

4. RECOMMEND DEPARTMENT PASS CAIRO, JERUSALEM (FOR ATHERTON), DAMASCUS, JIDDA AND TEL AVIV.

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PICKERING

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